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ABSTRACT

Little attention has been given to institutional violence exercised by schools as a major stressor leading to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and high dropout rates among Latino students. Institutional violence is defined as the norms, values, and structures of institutions that exclude and discriminate against individuals of disadvantaged and culturally different groups, making their needs invisible. This paper describes a research project, an intervention strategy, and an educational approach that focus on the role of institutional violence in Latino student attrition, ways that institutional violence can be diminished, and the role of university scholars in bridging theory and practice. Focus groups on perceptions of neighborhood and institutional violence were conducted with secondary school students, dropouts, parents, and teachers in Southwestern Detroit, and student participants completed the Children's PTSD Inventory. The intervention, Youth Helping Youth, addressed both academic and affective needs of students through a tutoring program plus a psychologist-facilitated discussion group for high-risk middle school students in a predominantly Latino school. Tutors for the intervention were provided by a community service learning course at the University of Michigan; a second course focused on the politics of language and cultural identity among U.S. Latinos. Course assessment examined the development of cultural competence among participants. Recommendations are offered for teacher education related to cultural competence and the effects of institutional violence. (Contains 75 references.) (SV)

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Rethinking Violence in the Educational Crisis of U.S. Latinos

by Christina Jose-Kampfner
Eastern Michigan University

Frances Aparicio
University of Michigan

Working Paper No. 38
May 1998

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Rethinking Violence in the Educational Crisis of U.S. Latinos

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Rethinking Violence in the Educational Crisis of U.S. Latinos

This interdisciplinary research project, which took place in Southwest Detroit, is grounded in educational psychology, sociolinguistics, literature, and culture. Its focus is the multiple forms of violence affecting Latino/a youth and their school performance.

Southwest Detroit is a multiracial, multicultural community of Latinos (Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other South Americans), African Americans, Arab Americans, and Euro-Americans. This neighborhood is the home to the majority of Latinos who live in Detroit.

According to the 1990 Census, the Latino population in Detroit is 28,473, of which 36.6% are less than 18 years of age. However, this figure must be treated with caution: Latino community leaders report the population count is inaccurate due to many nonreported, undocumented immigrants living in the area. The Latinos in southwest Detroit comprises 44.2% of this neighborhood's total population. More than half, (55.4%) of its members do not have a high school degree; 71.5% of children are less than five years old; and, 61.4% of children less than 18 years of age live below the poverty level.

One avenue historically seen as a means for escaping bleak economic conditions is education. Unfortunately, the educational situation of many Latinos presents a similarly dismal picture. The high school dropout rate for the city of Detroit is 50%. However, community organizations such as Latino Family Services estimate the dropout rate for Southwest Detroit to be closer to 86%. The Detroit Public School System has failed to meet the needs of Latino youth. Southwest Detroit has 15 schools with a high concentration of Latino students, 1,500 Latino students in all, according to the estimate of the Detroit Public School System. Many Latino youth in this community do not successfully complete middle school. The number of culturally specific services available to Latinos is restricted. There are few Latino teachers and even fewer administrators in the 15 predominantly Latino schools. Since the ability of these schools to prepare youth for the technological demands of today's society is limited, this kind of preparation becomes impossible for those at risk of dropping out. Latino students view school with dissatisfaction and derision instead of considering it a site for learning and growth. Students see no reason to continue with their education, since they feel they are not accomplishing anything, and more importantly, because school does not address their everyday needs and realities. Schools continue to ignore not only students' bicultural values and beliefs, but also the violence children experience, both in and out of school. Poverty and the incumbent lack of opportunities and community resources make it difficult for students to remain in school. As a result, many Latino youth choose to dropout.

Rates of high school completion among U.S. Latino/as during the 1970's were recognized as problematic. More than 20 years later, in a decade supposedly characterized by educational revolutions such as multicultural pedagogy, Latino "push out" rates have become worse and are disproportionate to their numbers in the U.S. population. The high school completion rate among Hispanic students in 1972 was 51.9%. By 1989, 17 years later, it had increased to only 55.9%. Between 1985 and 1989, the Latino high school completion rate actually declined (American Council on Education 1990). The National Council of La Raza has characterized this national neglect of Latinos as a "crisis," and clearly recognizes the correlation between underachievement in education and the growing levels of poverty, particularly among Puerto Rican men (NCLR 1990). In Southwest Detroit, where our research was conducted, the current dropout rates among Latino/a students are estimated to be as high as 80% (Latino Family Services 1990). This alarmingly high rate is due in part to the small number of Latinos in the community and also to the socially disempowered status of its members.

Latino and Latina university scholars who work on areas related to language, culture, education, and psychology cannot remain unconcerned by these alarming figures and realities. The gap between enrollment of mostly middle-class Latino/a students at the university and the attrition rate among working-class students continues to widen. How can we address this reality within the university and intervene in the public school? We must develop a plan not only to change this social injustice, but also to make an impact at all levels of education. We can no longer afford to engage solely in research and teaching about Latino/as without directly impacting secondary and middle-school students and future teachers. We need to strategize and develop multiple interventions. We must address critically the role of higher education in effectively closing the gap between the production of multicultural knowledge in the universities, and its virtual absence from the middle and secondary school levels.

Hypothesis

The current undereducation of Latino/a students in this country's public schools is not merely a ramification of a larger overall national crisis in education; it is perhaps more essentially a result of the culmination of historically colonialist projects (Meier and Steward 1991; Montilla 1990) that have aimed to undermine cultural differences in the name of Americanization. The lack of culturally relevant reading materials, the limited curricula, the ill-prepared teachers, the cultural homogenization, the negative social constructs around Spanish in the United States, and the linguistic erasure of Spanish and Spanglish, [what Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) has coined "linguistic terrorism"], are specific factors and practices that play a central role in the alienation of Latino/a students in Southwest Detroit. This cultural violence, an articulation of U.S. national values that define who is an American and who is not, translates into a lack of knowledge about, and a devaluation of, Latino/a cultures by many teachers and administrators. Consequently, Latino/a culture is excluded from the curriculum.

This research project postulates that while researchers have explored neighborhood violence as the major cause of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, institutional violence exercised by schools has not been identified as a major stressor that could also lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a major contributor to the high national dropout rates among Latinos.

The concept of institutional violence used here is equivalent to previous definitions of "institutional racism," i.e., the ways in which the norms, values, and structures of institutions exclude and discriminate against individuals of disadvantaged and culturally different groups, rendering their needs in school, work, etc., invisible. The main difference between institutional and community violence is that the former is more subtle and sanctioned, therefore, more difficult to recognize. One of the major factors that produces institutional violence at school is the lack of cultural competence among teachers, administrators, and staff problem that must be addressed through universities training future professionals to mediate the crisis.

The specific questions and issues addressed in this study include the following:

What role does institutional violence play in Latino school attrition?

How can institutional violence be diminished?

What is the role of university scholars in bridging theory and practice?

Methodology

This study is comprised of three components: a research initiative, an intervention strategy, and an educational approach.

Aqualitative approach was used in the research initiative, consisting of testimonies from parents, students, and members of the community organized into groups. Focus groups are planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions in a permissive, non-threatening environment, on a defined area of interest. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion (Krueger 1988). This technique was chosen not only because it was designed to gain understanding of human behavior from the actors'own frame of reference. (Bogdan 1995), but in response to the noticeable lack of active participation by the Latino community and by students doing research about dropouts and schooling.

From January to June 1995, 10 focus groups were conducted: two with high school dropouts, two with middle school students, two with high school students, two with parents, and two with teachers. Community organizers and social workers were also interviewed. The investigator also includes three years of critical observations derived from working at the particular school where this study took place.

We obtained quantitative data by assessing the participants for PTSD, utilizing the Children's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Inventory (Saigh, 1989). This instrument was developed on the basis of the DSM-III criteria for formulating an axis I of PTSD diagnosis. The instrument includes four sub-tests that we scored on a dichotomous basis (e.g., 1 for presence, 0 for absence of symptoms). The first sub-test assesses traumatization. The second sub-test assesses trauma-related ideation (e.g., Do you sometimes feel as if the experience is happening all over again?). The third is on general effect (e.g., Have you become less interested in seeing friends or doing things you used to enjoy?), and the final sub-test explores diverse symptoms (e.g., not being able to concentrate) that were not apparent before trauma. Field trials reveal that the instrument correctly classified 84% of the cases previously diagnosed as PTSD through unstructured clinical interviews. We offered the scale in either Spanish or English, depending on the linguistic competence of each child.

In order to assess his or her level of achievement in reading and mathematics, each child was given a brief version of the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT). Grade and age norms provided another factor for determining level of school achievement.

We designed the intervention strategy as an action research project to be implemented at two middle schools in Southwest Detroit. Youth Helping Youth, a tutoring program founded in 1992 by Dr. José Kampfner, paid attention to both the academic and affective needs of the tutees. In addition, a trained psychologist facilitated discussion groups that provided a forum for students to discuss their concerns about their everyday realities. The 36 middle school students participating in the tutoring program were selected by a teacher. The criteria used for selection were behavior problems and/or high risk for dropping out. Most students were also behind academically.

The third component consisted of two courses offered at the University of Michigan: a community service learning course, which provided the tutors for the intervention component, and a multicultural literature course on the politics of language and cultural identity among U.S. Latino/as. The assessment examining the impact of these two courses in the development of cultural competence was based mostly on student evaluations, classroom performance, and discussions.

Youth Helping Youth brings together post secondary students as volunteer tutors, mentors, group leaders, and junior high school students in a predominantly Latino middle school in Southwest Detroit. The intent of the program, composed of 20 students who tutored for three hours twice a week, was two-fold: first, the program addressed academic needs of the Latino students by tutoring; second, support groups focused on individual attention addressing students' emotional needs. The program integrated academic and emotional support, recognizing that it is insufficient to address each independently. The sustained individual attention received by students during their tutoring session was unusual during their typical school day, and gave the students a profound sense of importance. Historically, most of these students have been stereotyped as underachievers and have not considered themselves worthy of this kind of attention. This session, consisting of one hour of tutoring, helped them to not only complete their school work, but also provided students with new self confidence enabling them to believe in their own potential.

"Latino and Latina Literature's: The Politics of Language and Cultural Identity," the second course offered at the university as part of this research project, develops students' cultural competence about Latino/as bilingualism and speech acts for those who may be future bilingual professionals or Spanish teachers. Through an interdisciplinary approach that includes sociolinguistics, poetry, testimonies, cultural studies, and various scholarly essays on bilingual education, students are exposed not only to the subordinate position of Spanish within the United States, but also to the ways in which U.S. Latino/as have deployed their linguistic marginality in creative ways, as cultural resistance.

Literature Review

> *They [the Latino students] have lots of problems at home and they do not do as well as the other kids in the school. (A principal at an urban school)*

Researchers have investigated the dropout rates of Latinos less than those of other ethnic groups. When research has been conducted, the main perspective has focused on the individual, blaming home problems for Latino underachievement. Studies fail to focus on the school environment and the school's role in poor performance. Despite the inherent difficulties of identifying and counting school dropouts, there have been efforts at surveying and studying dropout rates among various minority groups at the national level. The literature review clearly suggests Hispanics have a higher incidence of high school dropout rates than any other cultural or ethnic group in this country. The alarmingly high rate for U.S. Latinos is neither surprising nor recent. One study has suggested that the "dropout rate for Hispanics has been relatively constant for the last 20 years" (General Accounting Office 1986; Florida State Commission of Hispanic Affairs 1988) in contrast to the declining dropout rate among Whites and Blacks. Other studies have painted a grimmer picture of rising dropout rates for Latino youth (ASPIRA 1990, General Accounting Office 1996).

At the national level, the 1994 GAO Report found that 1.15 million Hispanics age 16-24 dropped out before completing high school. This constitutes a 30% dropout rate, in contrast to that of non-Hispanic blacks (18%) and non-Hispanic Whites (10%). This significantly higher rate for Latinos seems altogether low when compared with other studies and with local Latino rates. The American Council of Education, for instance, documented in 1990 the high school completion rate for Hispanics was 55.9% by 1989, thus suggesting that approximately 44% of all His-

panics do not complete high school. The National Council of La Raza, in its 1990 Report, *Hispanic Education: A Statistical Portrait,* stated that Hispanics remain the most undereducated major segment of the U.S. population. The gap between Hispanics and non-Hispanics continues to widen. Thus, the average range of dropout percentages for Hispanics has been around 40-50% at the national level.

Moreover, these significantly high figures do not reflect the crisis-like proportions of Hispanic dropouts in some local communities. As if the 30% national rate that the GAO documents were not critical enough, local statistics around the country should be of primary concern to all educators, Latino and non-Latino alike. In the state of Michigan the 1986 study *Hispanic School Dropout and Hispanic Student Performance in MEAP Tests: Closing the Gap* (HSD Study) summarized the state dropout rate at 47-55%, percentages that evince that "Hispanics in grades 9-12 are dropping out at rates three or four times higher than the rest of the student population in Michigan's public schools." In Southwest Detroit, local estimates of 80% have been documented by Latino Family Services. Latinos in Detroit and Michigan are victimized by a systemic invisibility, the result of being a much smaller group than the African American community, which historically has represented the minority that iconized "cultural difference" throughout Michigan. Latinos are a minority within the cultural, racial, and ethnic hierarchies already established in the region.

Unfortunately, rates in larger cities such as New York and Chicago are equally high. Rates in other urban areas range from a 40% national dropout rate (Brown 1980) for Hispanics to 45% in California, 56.7% in Chicago and 80% in New York (Fernández and Vélez 1985; Steiner 25). These statistics prove the crisis in Detroit is not an isolated case. This testifies to what NCLR (1990) has characterized as a national crisis, that is, the national neglect of Hispanics in education and the concomitant undereducation, or "push out" (Fine 1990) rates for Hispanics.

Some studies have mentioned differences among Latino groups, including the HSD. Chapa and Valencia (1993) report that different dropout rates are evident within Latino groups. The GAO Report (1986) broke down the overall Hispanic dropout rate into those for Central Americans (36%), Mexican Americans (34%) and South Americans (12%). The report suggests that 1 out of 10 Hispanic dropouts is Puerto Rican, a surprisingly low estimate for those who are familiar with the educational crisis of young Puerto Ricans on the East Coast. However, The National Council of La Raza (1990a) report states that Puerto Ricans have the lowest math scores of all Hispanic subgroups and are most likely to report grades in the bottom quartile, and less likely than other Hispanic students to have plans to enroll in college (NCLR 1993; Ronda y Valencia 1994).

Different percentages for each group should continue to be documented since diverse factors inform each group's educational performance. However, this data must be interpreted by taking into account the diversity of social positions between some Cuban Americans immigrants, and the most recent immigration of Mexican and Central Americans. The historical immigration realities of various Latino groups must be considered in order not to see these differences as individual group differences, but rather as a social problem based on the acceptance of different groups to this country in diverse historical times.

Another distinction that must be considered is the percentage of Hispanic dropouts who are foreign-born and those who are U.S. born (Hirano-Nakanishi 1986). It has been asserted that foreign-born Hispanics have higher rates of dropping out than those U.S. born Latinos. 64% of Hispanic dropouts were born outside the U.S. and 31% are born Puerto Rican versus the 23% dropout rates of U.S. born Puerto Ricans (General Accounting Office 1994; Rong and Preissle-Goetz 1990). It has also been documented that foreign-born Hispanics have a significantly higher dropout rate (49%) than foreign-born Asians (13%) and foreign-born Whites (15%) (Rong and Preissle-Goetz 1990).

Factors such as cultural adjustments and limited abilities to speak English have helped explain these higher incidences of dropouts among the foreign-born. This information, however, does not exclude the fact that Latinos also confront what Meier and Stewart have called "second generation discrimination" Chapa (1988), in a secondary analysis of the census found dropout rates to be higher between second and third generation Mexican immigrants than first generation or immigrants. Immigrants have often been blamed for the high dropout rate especially among Mexican American groups. One must consider that only 21% of all school-age Latino children were first generation immigrants in 1988 (Chapa y Valencia 1993). What is most important in understanding the dropout rates is not necessarily the numbers of groups that dropout, but the reason why they do so.

These numbers could be discussed and interpreted ad infinitum. What is most compelling about studies on dropouts is the analysis of the factors that influence stu-

dents to leave school. Numerous causes have already been identified. The most powerful predictors for dropping out are: low educational attainment, having to repeat classes (NCLR 1990), poor grades, personal and family reasons (i.e. early marriage and parenthood), alienation, low socioeconomic status, low motivation, lack of parental involvement, and limited English skills (General Accounting Office 1994; Tidwell 1988; Rong and Preisser 1990; NCLR 1990b; Fernandez 1989; Steinberg, Blinde and Chan 1984).

However, these analysis do not address the factors within the educational system that lead to institutional racism, cultural violence and linguistic terrorism, and the breakdown of teacher/student relationships. Tidwell (1988) recognizes the need to improve teaching, teachers, and counseling practices in the Los Angeles area schools. Overall the statistical discourse and the accompanying analysis of the majority of these studies presents the individual student, the Hispanic, and his/her family culture and heritage, as the principal locus or source of the educational disadvantage and failure. Failure is usually attributed to the students as individuals or to their families as the bearers of cultural or educational deficiencies. Our study agrees with the HSD Study when it states:

> *School failure is the proximate cause of dropouts leaving school, and this failure is evident early in a youngster's school career. By the time the potential dropout reaches senior high school, a sense of alienation is clearly evident. At this level, the youngster's self-esteem especially as it relates to academics, is battered by teacher and peer lack of acceptance. This rejection probably leads to feelings of alienation and a general sense of futility which almost certainly is the root cause of the more passive approach to learning adopted by many of the potential dropouts in this study. (p.29)*

The relationship between dropping out of school and the use and abuse of drugs has been documented by several authors (Kandel 1975; Eliot et al 1986; Mensch and Kandel 1988; Chavez, E. 1992). The literature investigating the relationship between dropping out of school and substance abuse among Mexican American youth is exceedingly limited but is more extensive than the literature on Cubans, Puerto Ricans, or Central Americans. Bruno and Doscher (1979) were the only researchers to publish on the subject until 1989.

The relationship between the socioeconomic status and dropout rates of African American students in urban areas is well established in the literature (Erkstrom et al., 1986; Fine 1986; Hahn and Danzberger 1987; Morrow 1986; Bowditch 1993). That relationship must be considered when examining the high dropout rates for Latinos. The trends of Latino poverty over the last decade are disturbing. During the 1980's Latinos experienced a notable increase in the poverty rate when compared to African Americans or Whites. In 1992, the poverty rate of Latinos was almost six points above the 1979 level, compared to less than one point higher for African Americans and one and one half points higher than Whites (Enchautegui 1995). According to the U.S. Census (1993) Latino children are at a particularly high risk for poverty. In 1992, 39% of Latinos under the age of 18 were living in poverty, up from 29% in 1979.

The U.S. Census Bureau (1993) Center of Budget and Policy Priorities report the poverty rate for Hispanics remains at nearly the same level as during the 1980 recession. Among non-Hispanics, by contrast, poverty rates have declined during the recovery, making Hispanics the only racial or ethnic group whose poverty rates remain at or close to recession levels. This becomes more dramatic if one considers that the poverty rate for Latino children follows a distinct pattern. Poverty declines substantially for African Americans and White children when they are about 5 years old, but not for Latino children of the same age (Enchautegui 1995). Poverty is a social problem suffered by many Latino children, putting them in the category of "at risk." In this context, a return to the original 1980's definition of the term "at risk" is in order. According to Ronda and Valencia (1994) this term was coined by the critics of the 1980's excellence movement to refer to how "curriculum standardization created insensitive and impersonal school environments and thus placed students in jeopardy for failure." Meaning, the institutional policies and environment place the students "at risk." This does not mean, as the term is currently used, that failure is a product of personal deficiencies.

The factors mentioned above, constitute a constellation of behaviors, attitudes, and dissonances that reflect the disarticulation between the school culture and those of the students. Tidwell (1988) encapsulates this concept by his definition of alienation. All of the other factors are the results or repercussions of this alienation: low educational attainment, poor grades, absenteeism, limited skills in English, and low motivation to study constitute intercultural conflict in which students articulate a certain degree of resistance to being Americanized. We will see below how these behaviors could be interpreted as symptomatic of PTSD.

The literature on colonialism has been used very sparingly in the analysis of the Puerto Rican and Chicano dropout phenomenon. We must interpret the behavior of Latino students that does not comply with the institutional expectations of academic success not only as one more isolated instance of the student's individual and personal failure, or as a result of the disadvantages that are caused by poverty, immigration, and cultural difference, but rather as articulations of larger, intercultural conflicts and of a history of colonialism that continues to characterize the educational project of the United States.

Unveiling the colonialist nature of the school's politics against Hispanic students, Louis Reyes addresses the need to "set national standards regarding school conditions and practices" (Reyes 1990). In a brief, yet illuminating testimony at the Florida Testimony for Public Forum on Hispanic Education, Luis Reyes identifies serious concerns about the "systemic failure of schools" to address and fulfill the cultural, educational, and individual needs of Hispanic students. Rumberger and Larson (1992) also call for the establishment of more programs for Hispanic dropouts. Of the 500 programs nationwide, only 26 primarily serve Hispanics, clearly indicating the still lingering invisibility of Latinos at the national level. While Latinos constitute the largest percentage of students who experience educational failure, they seldom benefit from major funding, programs, and interventions.

Locally, the HSD Study of 1986 recognizes a more complex portrait of the dynamics involved in dropping out. It identifies, analyzes, and documents three categories of such factors: school environment, home-school relations, and student attitudes. Interviews with Hispanic students (both graduates and dropouts) throughout the state of Michigan led to a variety of reported reasons for leaving school. These reasons reveal the primary importance of school policy and curriculum in this dropout crisis.

The reasons are as follows: 1) having problems with school discipline; 2) not believing that a diploma is important for getting a job; 3) getting married; 4) feeling that classes were boring or irrelevant; 5) not feeling part of school; and 6) missing too much school. Of the six reasons, getting married (#3) is the only personal factor. The remaining five are expressions of the "educational alienation" the students experience, and their resistance to policing, control, and disciplinary measures that they find offensive, and that curtail their own personal integrity. Absenteeism (#6), which may be because of economic need, may also be the result of "not feeling part of school" (#5), which may in turn be a response to a curriculum that does not speak to their own cultural or class experiences, and (#4), low expectations on the part of teachers. In addition, absenteeism may also be related to PTSD avoidance behavior. Reason #2, "not believing that a diploma is important for getting a job," reflects the failure of guidance counselors in not preparing students for future careers rather than an expression of some cultural value that breeds undereducation. As our study will indicate, disciplinary problems (#1) are central to the negative experiences of Latino students in our schools, where policing measures, control, discipline, and containment replace active learning as the goal of education.

The HSD Study also identified home-school relations as a crucial factor in preventing dropouts. We found that:

> *...the relationship between frequency of school-related, parental interaction, and status was highly significant and that while the dropout is fully aware of the difficulties he or she is having in school — there is no one 'in authority' (i.e., a parent or teacher) who appears to really care. Without such a system of support which might allow youngsters to deal with an adverse situation in school, it is not surprising that so many choose to withdraw from the situation. (18)*

Unlike other studies which tend to perpetuate the myth that poor or working-class Hispanic parents "don't care," this document problematizes the home-school relationship as a multiple dynamic in which the communication breakdown between student and parent can be doubled by the difficulties parents face when they experience discrimination in the school against their son or daughter or when they do not effectively communicate with the school staff (20). This is an important factor rarely acknowledged in national discussions about the dropout phenomenon. Instead, in gross generalizations, Hispanic parents from low socioeconomic status tend to be depicted as uninvolved or uninterested in their children's education. The data provided by the Five Cities Study clearly refute this racist assumption, showing that in fact "although Hispanic parents may not have completed high school, they expect their children to finish high school and get a better job." Our primary data also show that parents are highly concerned with their children's education. The Youths of Metro Detroit (1994) study, although not done exclusively with Latinos, found the reasons given for dropping out of school were not family reasons but school reasons.

The HSD Study conducted in Michigan, reports that of the 54 dropout students interviewed, "Only eight subjects mentioned difficulty with schoolwork and seven subjects mentioned difficulties with English." This information points more towards "boredom" rather than "difficulties" as a root cause for low grades and eventually for dropping out of school. These factors, combined with tracking and segregatory practices, create highly discontented students.

In conclusion, most of the dropout literature concentrates on personal factors, virtually ignoring those studies identifying the environmental factors affecting school performance, in particular how the school itself contributes to this problem. Therefore, we postulate that institutional violence plays a fundamental role in Latino school attrition by exacerbating home and community stress, thereby making school an extension of, not an exception to, the chronic violence these children experience and witness. We will examine the question of agency, i.e. how teachers and administrators are agents of violence masked by repressive institutional norms which make them personally unaccountable. We hope this paper will contribute to making the schools more sensitive to those they serve.

PTSD Syndrome

> *In the streets, no matter what I mean I got to fight. I got in a street fight and the guy pulled out a blade and stabbed me through my shoulder, right through and after that, I kept on fighting and my bone came out, my knuckle. You know and I was that, I mean, I got in some serious, I mean I not so long ago some people got shot, you know, because they wanted my coat and I am like, 'You ain't going to have it,' so they shot me just like that. You know, violence on the street it's nothing like television. It's nothing like television. On television, you go he's going through the alley. Pow, shot him in the head, he runs, jumps in the garbage can, changes coats, stays in there, nobody knows, but if you see it and it's real life, you going to think, what should I do, sneak out? Stay and be quiet? Should I say, 'Hey, I saw a guy running,' it's nothing like television. (14-year-old child in Southwest Detroit)*

Thirty-six students were selected by the teacher to participate in the tutoring program. The criteria used for the selection of students were behavior or academic problems. Most students were also academically underachieving. The participants were assessed for PTSD with the Children's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Inventory (Saigh 1989). The criteria used to assess PTSD was approved by the American Psychiatric Association's *Desk Reference to the Diagnostic Criteria from DSM-IV* (1994). Post traumatic stress disorder occurs when "a person has been exposed to a traumatic event" in which two of the following are present: 1) "the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted by an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self and others,"; 2) "the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Note: In children, this may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior."

Terr (1985) discusses five general traumatic experiences that often result in children in the presence of PTSD. They are: "(1) threats against the child's life; (2) fears about physical harm; (3) concern over the safety of attachment figures; (4) threats to self-image; and (5) a sense of isolation surrounding these threats and fears" (1988). All five are traumatic because they not only undermine a child's sense of safety when they occur, but they also severely undermine the possibility of feeling safe in the future. As a consequence, the child feels a constant threat to his or her well being and develops coping mechanisms to deal with this threat. The effects of trauma can severely interfere with a child's learning ability.

This study began as an effort to understand the possible impact that neighborhood violence has on the high dropout rate of Latinos students. According to the *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States* (1991), during the 1980's, we witnessed an extraordinary increase in neighborhood violence, especially among youth in major cities across the United States. Detroit has been no exception to this trend. In Detroit, 72.6% of all 1990 youth deaths were violent deaths. (The Youth of Metro Detroit 1994) The origins of this violence are deeply rooted in the declining economic stability of city industry, the nationwide drug epidemic, racism, school dropout rates, and the relatively recent acceptability of guns for solving both domestic and crime related conflicts. Although inner city murder rates have tended to receive nationwide attention and concern, these figures represent only a crude index of the day-to-day community violence that characterizes urban neighborhoods such as Southwest Detroit. Although this research began under the

assumption that neighborhood violence was the main reason for poor academic performance among these children, a different picture began to emerge as the theme analysis of the focus groups and clinical interviews took place. The testimonies of these children spoke of the school's environment producing and augmenting instead of ameliorating the violence in the lives of these children.

There is a growing body of research that documents that children and youth caught up in community violence are at great risk for developmental impairment and emotional trauma (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, and Pardo 1992; Garbarino et al. 1991; Goleman 1986; Rosenblatt 1983). Fitzpatrick (1990) indicates a significant relationship between exposure to chronic community violence and stress reactions in a sample of elementary school children living in a high violence community. An important element of this literature is that children can suffer from the effects of violence by just witnessing it; that is, witnessing violence itself is a traumatic experience. Jaffe et al. (1986) found that adjustment difficulties for children who were directly victimized and those who merely observed victimization were comparable. Frederick (1985) reports PTSD avoidance symptoms of children who witnessed on a playground their friends being shot by a sniper across the street.

Surprisingly, children who were not present at the time also developed avoidance behaviors and other PTSD symptoms because of the shooting. (Zeilikoff 1986; Clarke 1988) As early as 1971, Gardner reported that experiences of violence can chronically impair learning. Pynoos and Nader (1988, 1990) found that children who experienced life threatening situations or who witnessed injuries to others in their neighborhoods or homes, had serious difficulties in concentration and performance in school. In this study the authors attribute this type of difficulty to an intrusion of thoughts related to violent experiences that distract children from their schoolwork. (Pynoos and Nader 1988) Often these children are labeled as "uncontrollable" by teachers and school administrators, subsequently dismissed as trouble-makers, learning disabled or spacey, and ultimately, pushed out of school. The primary data analysis of this study suggested that the school environment in poor inner city schools with a high concentration of Latinos increases rather than decreases the violence in the lives of these children.

Schools did not consider the violence these children experience as a possible reason for their problems in learning. Instead, their conduct is labeled as difficult, and the avoidance is translated into "spacey(ness), and irresponsibility." This labeling effectively dismisses the students as having personal problems instead of diagnosing the root cause of the difficulties, and fails to consider their behavior as the product of a large political system which includes the school.

Children's testimonies:

> ***Girl:*** *There was this one big building down where we live somebody caught in a fire and like third street it's like three stores straight across the street from where we live and each one of them, last week somebody caught all three of them on fire, and I was sitting on the porch and this man he kept going up in the building and I didn't know what he was doing, and I went in the house and came back and when I came back the building was on fire. I said I saw the man, but they never followed him because he left.*
>
> ***Girl:*** *It was around Christmas last year and there was this man... I don't know... he was about 24 years old. I was walking, I don't remember, it was still daytime, it was around in the summer and ... this lady that got stabbed, this guy just kept stabbing and stabbing and stabbing and stabbing and all these people were around and that guy he just started running and the lady I think she is pregnant, I don't know, he just kept stabbing her in the stomach.*

Schools in communities where the so-called "high risk" children live must understand the impact that schools and teachers have on the lives of these children as important institutions in their lives. Focus groups and observations reveal that children who are doing well in school feel that at least some teachers like them, as opposed to children with low grades who report that no adult in the school likes them.

Thirty-six Latino children (20 males and 16 females) were given the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Inventory (Saigh 1989). Clinical interviews with the children and their parents were conducted and personal observations of tutors and investigators were included. Ten focus groups were conducted to assess the causes and types of violence children experience in their community. These children were assessed in both the schools and in their homes. The children, who were part of a tutoring pro-

gram, were chosen because they were considered by the school to be "at risk." The Wide Achievement Test (WRAT) was given to the children in order to examine their academic achievement. According to the WRAT, these children had a mean score of three to five grades academically behind their peers. In the PTSDI inventory the students reported three or more symptoms related to PTSD. They consisted of: difficulties sleeping, 63%; avoidance behavior related to going to school, 73%; flash backs about school incidents, 52%; street violence, 39%; and disassociation, 71%. The predominant symptoms among the children were disassociation and trauma avoidance. These results were further investigated through the focus groups.

Schools have a great impact on a child's life, representing, besides the child's family, the most important developmental unit in modern society. Children spend more time in school than with their parents. Consequently, schools must be considered of equivalent importance to the family in the lives of these children and are thus equally likely to traumatize children.

One important finding from the theme analysis of this study is that schools seem to emerge as places where children experience stressors that are not considered acts of violence but can result in trauma. Hyman (1988) has proposed that adult-oriented diagnosis for post traumatic stress disorder may not be appropriate for understanding PTSD in children. In the literature on adults, the references are always made to exceptional stressors, stressors "outside the range of common human experience" (244). Hyman's hypothesis is that children may be vulnerable to less extreme stressors, that is, social stressors over which they have no control. These stressors may not fulfill the criteria for exceptional stressors, but these environmental stressors, when converged with certain developmental stages, may cause post-traumatic stress in children. In school, corporal punishment and verbal assault used to motivate or criticize students "are in fact perceived as humiliating, denigrating, or embarrassing" (251). Therefore, what may be perceived by the institution as common disciplinary norms, are in fact potential sources for PTSD in children whose lives are already surrounded by violence.

The themes from the focus groups speak of the experience these children have with multiple kinds of stressors, such as community and school violence, and institutionalized violence in the form of cultural terrorism against them.

The children reported that the school humiliated them and called them names, e.g., "You are good for nothing," "Tell the fat Mexican to come," "stupid, bastard, burro." As a 12 year old expressed:

> *Teachers in the school cusses at you. I mean like the other day, you know like somebody had wrote a picture about her on the board, you know, and they had put 'witch'on it and then she started cussing at us all because of the picture, and she started saying the 'B' word and we were all tripping out.*

According to the children, the faculty also belittled them using sarcasm ("You are so intelligent. Ha Ha!!") They insulted the children's family ("Your mother must be on drugs," or "Your sister is pregnant because your parents do not take care of her"). In addition the teachers segregated them. Latino students have been found to experience greater segregation than Blacks in Alabama and Mississippi (Chapa and Valencia 1993). Haynes (1988) found that all of these elements as well as frustration and boredom -- are practices that may cumulatively constitute exceptional stress likely to cause PTSD in children. One additional stressor for Latino/a students is having to confront cultural invisibility in the curriculum combined with constant denigration of their linguistic heritage.

Hostility, what students refer to as "an attitude" permeates the teacher/student relationship. In the focus groups they would mention this time and again:

> *Like if you sit down and slouch like this... right then and there they mark you as a lazy person... start treating you with an attitude.*

> *The problem with teachers is that as soon as you come into class, and the way you look is the way they treat you, you know. If you sit down, you can't even sit down the way you want to because that's the way they're going to treat you. They pick you out, you know already, and then you may not do nothing bad but they automatically claim you as one of the bad students and you do this, you do that, you can't even change no more because you're automatically claimed, you know, same as you always been.*

...like they have their favorite students then they spend more time with them and then when you try to ask questions they go, you know, start off with their smart alecky remark and they're like, 'Well, I'm talking, you're rude!' And it's like, damn I'm only putting my hand up. So then kids when, you know, you get that attitude towards you, you know, the students don't even want to ask anymore because they know what the answers are going to be like, 'Wait!'or 'You're rude' or 'You're insubordinate.

Focus groups and observations reveal that children who were doing well in school felt that at least some teachers liked them, as opposed to children with low grades who reported that no adult in the school liked them. Parents are not the only adults important in the lives of the traumatized children. In fact, studies on resilient children have noted that they enjoy school (Kellam 1975; Werner and Smith 1982), and that in many cases, teachers make the difference in the life of these children. As in the following quotes demonstrate:

If you said anything that the teacher doesn't want to hear, you are rude, I hate school.

I forgot my books and the teacher told me you are irresponsible, get out of my class. My friend said, you can share my book but she said no, and sent me to the office. I hate her class anyway.

When the University tutors or the facilitator went to pick up children for tutoring, it was not unusual for the teachers to make derogatory comments such as: *"Take this good for nothing,"* or take this *"burro"* (jackass). An administrator in the school, in the presence of tutors and a facilitator, argued with a child saying, *"Devil, you will burn in hell, you are a Devil and will burn in hell."*

This perceived hostility makes the student withdraw as a means of self-defense. In order not to be subjected to this threatening "attitude" the students prefer to avoid interaction, a defense mechanism perceived by teachers and others as lack of interest. Other students try not to succumb to this "attitude:"

Like me, I don't want to be in the bilingual program, for me the classes are easy because I was in the rest of the school and never did I have a bilingual program. I was always in the regular program. For me, all of this, I finish first and then I have nothing to do, that's why I don't want to be in the bilingual program, but they tell me that I have to stay. I don't have to stay if I don't want to study the bilingual program, I don't have to. That is the problem, sometimes the teachers they try to leave you there, whether you want to or not. [if parents come]... then they make up excuses, like we only have seven more weeks of school and if you change your kid now, they won't catch up with the other people in the room, see, and I mean, it's boring, when I come to school I know everything that they're doing already and I just get bored and I'm used to struggling.

This is an example of a child requesting a greater challenge but being denied the opportunity. Her characterization of the bilingual education program as "boring" reveals on the one hand, the uneven ways in which these programs expose students to grade-level content and academically challenging materials. On the other, her boredom echoes a more general feeling on the part of many students about their particular school. Alluding to the absence of extracurricular activities and field trips, and to specific classes in which teachers expected very little work, students felt they were not being exposed to stimulating challenges. For example, last year one of the students being tutored in the program told me that her homework for that day was on page 50 of her spelling book. When we turned to that page, I asked her to begin the exercises. She then clarified that they did not have to complete the exercises, but instead had to copy the page! Some of these instances speak louder to this reality than the most impressive and comprehensive data.

The other side of the coin is the frustration expressed by students who confront academic demands without the needed support:

It [science] ain't hard, it's just like she writes stuff on the board you can't read and you can't get it. When she tells us something and you don't hear it...

Another student complained of being given insufficient time to read "a whole story" and answer questions which set her up for failure at a task she could have dealt with in a more reasonable time frame.

One of the tutors commented in his journal on the ways that unreasonable expectations lead students to inevitable failure. The tutor writes

> *...children were not allowed to take books outside of the classroom. Consequently, children were expected to complete their homework assignments during class time. Now, assuming that the teacher takes approximately half an hour to explain the lesson, this gives the children about 25 minutes to complete their homework. E., who had some trouble with adding, subtracting, and extreme difficulties with multiplication, was expected to complete 20 pre-algebra problems in that short time frame.*

The tutor goes on to explain that E. took about seven minutes to complete a problem and was excited about his ability to do the homework because it was proof that he was not stupid or lazy, yet it would have taken E. two hours and 20 minutes to have finished the assignment. Since he only had one hour, he becomes frustrated and decides not to turn in anything. The result is that E. will be labeled lazy and stupid by the teacher, which will eventually result in his being neglected. This is a salient example of the vicious cycle these children fall into.

Negative labeling is, undoubtedly, another form of intimidation that gradually erodes the students' self-esteem and creates resentment among them. Tracking practices in the school are common, but for Latino students they are alarming. The National Council of la Raza (1989) reported that 75% of Latino students have been placed in low-level curricular programs that make college education improbable. Other tracking practices are more subtle, such as seating children according to their academic achievement (tracked) in the classroom:

> ***Girl:*** *...the room is like this way and it's divided into two sides. She [the teacher] said she sits the not so smart people on this side and the smart people on this side, and I don't [think] that's fair.*
>
> ***Girl:*** *She told me, this is what she did to me, she told me she going to say "Well it's" uhm, uhm, she got everybody on one side and it's about four seats left and she going to tell me: "I ain't going to teach on that side because, because it... You had to get an A on your paper this week, then I sit on that side." I got two A's on both the tests and she didn't even seat me on that side, she going to say "you still an illiterate."*
>
> ***Leader 1:*** *How did that make you feel?*
>
> ***Girl:*** *It made me feel bad. I'm not an illiterate person.*
>
> ***Girl:*** *She divide the room into half and put independent things on the side... was on this side, that ain't fair, because she is telling the kid that....they dumb.*
>
> ***Girl:*** *This teacher, Mr... he be screaming at us for nothing. He screams at us because we look at him.*

Students in this study reported that when teachers "behave this way," they abusively tune themselves out and start to think about what they did yesterday at home. One student says: "When I go home and I am watching TV I think about what the teacher did and I get angry. I do not want to think about that stuff but it comes on my mind."

> ***Boy:*** *This teacher I have for math he hits the table every two seconds and tells us we are headed to be nobody.*

Students are aware of the unfairness of these practices. Michelle Fine found in her study of dropouts that children who dropout of school were more likely to see injustice and consequently want to change it. We will argue that by having to undergo such injustice every day, a child will be traumatized by the time he/she becomes an adolescent. This injustice forms the basis for academic differences, but most egregious, perpetuates racism. For instance, students affirmed that some teachers actually "put the White kids at the front of the class and moved the other kids around." Others commented that a teacher didn't swear at Whites, but only at Latinos and Blacks. This story is not an isolated case; a teacher reported:

I have kids tell me our administration here is biased and they are more pro African American students. If an African American student does this, and a Hispanic does this, the same exact thing, the African American kid will be given a second chance the Hispanic is out, gone, transferred.

Openly racist comments or conduct have been punished or addressed, as in the case of a teacher who was fired because of racist slurs. A boy commented:

...the teacher used to be like, 'I hate Mexicans, I hate Puerto Ricans, the only thing I like are my nation, they're the best' and I'd be like, 'Yo, woman, chill', you know, I'd be like, 'this racist junk finished a long time ago', you know, chill with that. I sat there all, it came to a point where the whole class... because she was prejudiced. I mean Blacks, Whites, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, everybody just couldn't deal with the teacher. And they had to have, they called a new teacher up in there, that wasn't prejudiced.

However, more subtle forms of racism go unpunished and continue to be unabated despite the fact that students do perceive them. Schools placed in disadvantaged neighborhoods are mainly concerned with safety; ironically, in the name of safety, outside violence is duplicated inside the schools as well. This is manifested when discipline, control, and containment become a higher priority. Although the intention is to protect the students "for their own good," this protection becomes what Alice Miller calls "poisonous pedagogy," where discipline is defined as obedience and submission of the will to the legitimance of another person. The results of these disciplinary policies unintentionally traumatize those who are in their care. For example, "the perception of gangs as omnipotent frequently leads schools either to react harshly with overly punitive and restrictive actions, or to be so intimidated that they refrain from taking any action at all" (Burnett and Walz 1994 ERIC).

My daughter has been suspended for writing "signs" on her notebook three times. I went to talk to the principal and told her she is not in a gang but it didn't help. Schools think they know your kids better than you do.

Discipline and suspension are used to target children whom the school does not want, in which case the students are pushed out. Two eighth graders in our program, J. and R., were pushed out of school in this fashion during the year they participated in the program. They were suspended at least once a week, the time of suspension ranging from one day to a two week period. The reasons for suspension were: *"not doing his work," "disruptive behavior"* (sending notes to a girl in class); *"intimidating behavior,"* (talking back at the teacher); behaviors which in schools outside the "war zone" would be deemed normal adolescent misconduct requiring a reprimand. J. and R. were members of a neighborhood gang and this reputation followed them in school, thus translating the fear teachers had of them into over-control of these adolescents. In contrast, tutors often commented: *"J. and R. are great to talk to and were great leaders during group discussions."* J.'s and R.'s leadership became their worst enemy in school. Their leadership was interpreted as a negative behavior and a quality that had to be controlled by the school instead of constructively examining their leadership abilities as a positive characteristic.

Children may be especially vulnerable to PTSD when teachers and other institutional personnel to whom they are entrusted use punitive techniques of discipline. This seems to be the case in the school where this study took place; discipline and control seem to be two of the school's most important goals.

Institutionalized violence against Latino parents was often expressed in the belief that the cause of the children's troubles were their parents. Teachers and administrators often said to us: "Their parents do not care," or "The children's problem are their parents and there is nothing we can do." The parents of these children were often blamed for not coming to meetings.

Contrary to this belief, we found that parents were concerned about their children's education but did not know what to do or how to help them. The Latino parents participating in this study attended and actively participated in the meetings. At the meetings, parents' attendance was about 60% to 75%. They came to voice their concerns and learn how to help their children. The parent groups met every week. All of the mothers whose children were in our program were invited to participate, and one of them was paid to organize the group. The main function of the group was to talk to parents about what was discussed during the week with their children. By doing this, the mothers could give us feedback, learn from the materials that we presented, and learn about the edu-

cational experiences of their children. Frequently, the mothers wanted to discuss domestic violence and teenage sexuality. They were also concerned with biculturalism and had an interest in understanding American culture, while keeping their Latino identity. We also assisted the mothers to deal with school administrators and gain better access to their children's education. As one parent said

> *I love to come to the group, I feel that since I've been coming to the group I understand my child more.*

Another commented:

> *I know he does not like to go to school, I do not know what to do. He used to love going to school and two years ago he began to tell me that the teachers did not like him, but I do not know what to do. I talked to the teacher and she says he does not pay attention.*

The parents of the children resorted to the usual practice of forcing their children to go to school, because they often did not understand that school itself was a source of trauma, therefore, considered a source of anxiety by children. According to the teachers, this avoidance behavior was reflected in approximately 8-10 absences a month. Yet these absences hardly ever occurred on the days the tutors were present. In fact, as a tutor wrote in his journal, *"The children were always waiting for us and when we were five minutes late they would say, 'You are five minutes late; where were you?'* This high attendance rate correlated to the attachment the students had with their tutors. Their absences from school and attendance in the tutoring program may be interpreted as an avoidance of the trauma the children may experience in school.

Parents often talked about the difficulties in sending their children to school. They mentioned that school was a traumatic experience for their children. Children show avoidance behavior by refusing to go to school. According to the parents, sometimes the situation becomes so unbearable that the students cannot face another day at school.

> ***Parent 1:*** *I went to school to know what the problem with him was because he said, 'even if you kill me, I will never return to that school, I will go to another school but not to that one. If you take me to the front doors, I will get out the door in the back, but I will not go' and I said, 'But why if you're not going to get the same teacher?' 'I won't go and I won't go.'*

> ***Parent 2:*** *Juan will not come to school. He hates it here. He says the teachers treat him badly and he hates school. I have tried everything from punishing to rewards but he hates school.*

> ***Parent 3:*** *I used to bring her crying all the way from home. She said if you force me to go to that school, I am going to kill myself. I asked why and she kept saying she hated the teachers, they make fun of the children.*

Our experience show that Latino parents want the best for their children like all other parents everywhere and at all socioeconomic levels. Nevertheless, they differentiate themselves from middle and upper class parents by seeing education as a means to escape poverty and as a means to escape the decay that surrounds them. Education is also seen as a means of providing their children with knowledge and skills needed to obtain a job that will allow them to live comfortably and with dignity. Middle class parents, on the other hand, are more competitive. They already have the comforts and dignity the Latinos aspire to; they do not question whether or not their children will finish high school and take for granted that their children will go to college. These middle-class parents generally want their children to go to school, but they also want them to be better than the others, compete with their classmates, get the best grades, the best parts in the school play, and receive all the awards and recognition. Although this sense of competition is absent from the discourse of Latino parents, a profound sense of concern is not. Middle class parents have power within the political structure that moves the school and are welcome at school, while Latino parents are viewed by the school's administrators and teachers as "problems." The parents stated:"I do not want to go to school because the principal makes me feel like I am a two year old again," or "When I went to talk to the principal about moving my child to another class, she made me feel like I didn't have enough education to know what is best for my kid but I am her mother I know what is best for her." Another said angrily, "I hate sitting at the principal's office, I know how she treats my kid, she doesn't like my kid. I feel angry with her for putting me in this position."

The parents' concern for education was reflected on the children. When asked what keeps them in school they responded: "Mom," "Parents," "Hopes for the future," "Because of my parents," "I try for her, I try for me, for hopes for the future," "...my mom, she always tells me she wants me to be better than her, you know, better than she was. She talks to me, she keeps me going too" "My

mom just wants me to finish school because she didn't finish her school. She wants me to be something she wasn't."

Children who were high risk and were having problems at school in this study were traumatized by the school. The children and their parents spoke of the traumatic situations they go through at school as being a central part of their lives. We cannot ignore the fact that these children experience multiple traumas such as street violence and poverty. However, this pilot study points to the possibility that schools, teachers, and administrators, as being an important part of the life, must not be overlooked as being the source of trauma causing PTSD among these children.

The high dropout rate among Latinos is also a result of the cultural violence exercised against them by schools that perpetuate racism, classism, and prejudice. Cultural violence against these children contribute to their trauma and failure at schools.

Cultural Violence and Colonial Alienation

Echoing Richard Rodriguez's dilemma in *Hunger of Memory*, Latino students in Detroit partly feel as if they are being pushed out of school because they are made to choose between their communities and their education. Education is offered as a way to escape not just the economic hardships of the "barrio," but Latino culture in general. Within an educational environment that does not prioritize the needs of these students and the diversity they embody within the larger Latino community, students' lives and experiences are deemed irrelevant to the continuation of academic learning. Our schools do not merely disregard the ethnicity of Latino students, but outright reject it, considering their cultural experiences as detrimental to their development as "Americans." Therefore, instead of deploying the personal voices and social experiences of the student population at hand, as border pedagogy asserts (Giroux 1991), many schools ultimately fail to integrate the multicultural aspects of knowledge, identity, and community into the classroom experience. Facing these institutionalized forms of cultural and linguistic violence, the fact that many children historically deemed ethnic deviants do make it through this educational system, is an astounding accomplishment in itself.

Despite the implementation of bilingual education programs at the site schools for this study, Latino/a students, particularly recent immigrants, still face educational institutions that constantly undermine their cultural identity and language as obstacles to academic success. Although the merits and/or limitations of bilingual education have been heatedly debated in the last fifteen years (see Kenji Hakuta, pp. 208-30 for a useful discussion and summary of these positions), we cannot enter into a full discussion of these controversies. (Footnote on books: Chavez, learning in two languages, critical perspectives, and hakuta) Given the heterogeneous nature and uneven implementation of bilingual education programs throughout the country, it is even more difficult to generalize about the cultural and academic impact of this pedagogical practice. However, what is clear from our study in Southwest Detroit is that bilingual education should not be considered, by itself, the exclusive space or the panacea for creating a bicultural learning environment within a school. Until overall negative attitudes about Latino/a culture begin to change, students in bilingual education programs will continue to be victimized by these a priori assumptions regarding their academic potential. Most specifically, the ways in which the Spanish language and Hispanic culture are deemed "disadvantages" to academic success continue to inform general expectations for this student sector.

Instances of these assumptions abound in the literature about dropouts, where references to home languages besides English are systematically judged as disadvantages or disabilities, instead of being considered as positive factors in assessing academic potential. The systematic construction of speaking Spanish as a deficit is clearly class and ethnically-marked, as bilingualism among Anglo students and upper-class "latinoamericanos" is, in contrast, deemed an asset.

In her sharp attack against bilingual education, Linda Chávez (1992) argues that Latino children have been victimized by bilingual education programs that "maintain and strengthen their ethnic identity." She argues that "in the process, these children have become the most segregated students in American public schools, kept apart from their English-speaking peers even after they have acquired basic English skills, sometimes for years" (9). Instead of blaming cultural reaffirmation as the source of segregation, enemies of bilingual education need to consider the increasing national patterns towards segregation to which Latino/a students have been subjected in the last 20 years. This pattern is exacerbated by the negative assumptions about Latino culture and the "remedial" nature of bilingual education, views still held by many teachers and administrators which continue to mark this cultural sector as intellectually, linguistically, and culturally inferior.

In contrast to Chávez, we found in our study no basis for perceptions that these programs retard students' assimilation or "Americanization" because they focus too much attention on maintaining the Spanish language and on cultural reaffirmation. We argue that the opposite was the case in the schools in Southwest Detroit: if anything, there was too little effort, if any, to integrate culture into academics. This situation is only a local instance of what Hakuta (1986) had already appraised as a national trend towards transitional programs:

> *Only a negligible proportion of schools attempt to maintain the native language of the children. Furthermore, over half of the schools do not provide any content area instruction in the native language of the children. (205)*

While bilingual math was taught in Spanish in one of the schools, reading materials and English texts do not include any significant units on Puerto Rican or Mexican cultures. As Ngugi wa Thiongo has defined it, "colonial alienation" results from the imposition of foreign reading materials and of the dominant language in the education of colonized countries. Colonized children are subject to the disassociative effects of such discrepancies between materials learned and language of conceptualization, on the one hand, and their own social and cultural environments, on the other. Moreover, they lose enthusiasm and motivation to learn, a response that may also partly explain the "boredom" documented earlier through the focus groups. Thus, Latino/a students face multiple forms of alienation in school, one aspect of which can be remedied by providing culturally-relevant materials on a more systematic basis.

Aware of this curricular lack, tutors from the Youth Helping Youth program provided materials that reflected students' cultural heritage. A clear shift in attitudes and level of motivation exhibited by the middle-school students was documented throughout the tutors' diaries:

> *They seem to miss New York a lot so I'm going to bring in some stories about Puerto Ricans from NY cause I'm sure that they'd enjoy that. We read one that I found in one of the books and A. was very excited because he recognized store and street names.(...) After that we worked on reading from the Latino Voices and I really enjoyed that...*

> *Today, I. (...) suggested reading about Puerto Rico (instead of basketball). I couldn't believe his reaction! He shouted Yes! Yes! a good fifteen times or so and jumped up and down in his seat! I never saw him so excited about working before.*

Throughout the semester, tutors realized that by reading Latino/a materials in English, the Spanish-dominant students were more eager to read in the language still considered foreign to them. The voices of Latinos, and the topics and experiences presented in these selections, allow the Spanish-dominant students to identify with what they read, thus perceiving English as a language closer to their own cultural world. Interlingual poetry, which switches from Spanish to English and vice-versa, could also serve as transitional reading materials for students learning English. Poems by Tato Laviera, Pedro Pietri, and Alurista, among others, were used for that purpose, although there was no systematic way of measuring the effect of this program on reading skills.

Integrating culture into academics is not limited to reading skills. Having noticed an indifference on the part of her tutee to completing a map of the United States, a tutor brought maps of Puerto Rico for the Puerto Rican students to practice labeling and identifying geographical items. While the students worked "diligently and happily," they were also able to reaffirm their cultural pride, as other students wondered what they were doing:

> *Kids came by and wondered what they were doing. E. and C. would look up and give them this huge smile saying that it was Puerto Rico, the most beautiful place in the world.*

Another tutor also noted the desire that middle-school Latino students have for integrating academics with culture:

> *As we studied math, P. began to sing Puerto Rican songs. These songs later turned into all types of Latino songs and before I knew it, many other kids began to sing along. It was interesting to see how these kids incorporated their Latino culture into their classroom activity. I had never been able to incorporate my culture into my academics. It was quite evident to me that when culture is incorporated into a school's academics, many of the minority students get more out of the education.*

The students impulse to express their cultural pride through singing would have been curtailed in the traditional classroom, where discipline and containment of distracting activities constitute the norm. During the tutorials, however, the students felt the freedom to reaffirm their culture and to integrate it into their academic tasks, a privilege that the Latino college student and tutor never had.

The tutors who shared this enthusiasm for the students' cultures were able to recognize how an ill-prepared curriculum has tremendous impact on the students' level of motivation:

> *I'm also finally understanding these kids. They are not slow at all. They just are being taught things that they could care less about, such as the U.S. As soon as you mention where they are from, they transform themselves into little sponges, waiting to absorb the information. Hopefully, I can provide some valuable information to E.*

> *Anyone who dares to say these kids are unintelligent and lazy need only to see the enthusiasm and eagerness in these kids' faces as they worked [on their map of Puerto Rico] and they would have seen a smart, diligent child.*

Students' performance in English, their motivation or lack thereof to learn the language, and the degree of fluency they may exhibit in school, are also very much related to the colonized status of Spanish in the United States and to the pressures to speak only English as the official, public language of the United States. As sites of official ideology, schools replicate national attitudes towards Spanish, which has been historically suppressed in the name of an (Anglo) American homogeneous cultural identity. Students in the focus groups shared their fears of being shamed because of their accent or lack of fluency:

> *...the students always make fun because they don't speak current English or things like that. The teachers have to understand that those who don't speak English well, don't talk in class for that same reason...*

> *...the teacher, she is American and it makes me embarrassed and nervous to talk...because the rest are, speak English well, and I don't speak it well. And I think that if I talk to her, if I ask her a question, they will laugh at me...*

The self-silencing to which these students allude needs to be recognized as a defense mechanism that will minimize further possibilities of humiliation and stereotyping for the non-English dominant students. Most common, however, is the perception that the less English he/she speaks, the less intelligent the student is, as one of the tutors recognized in her own interaction with a Spanish-speaking student:

> *E.'s biggest barrier seems to be her lack of English — at least for me. I have trouble seeing her true abilities because of the language problem.*

This tutor continues to identify speaking Spanish as a "language problem," which is the logic underlying most assessments of Spanish speakers in the United States. However, she does recognize that the barrier is not necessarily the student's responsibility, but hers as a monolingual Anglo tutor: "at least for me." While bilingual education programs supposedly address this problem, considering the minimal number of bilingual teachers in the site school (only four teachers in a school of 600 students and about 300 Latino students), coupled with condescending attitudes about the program (seen as remedial) and about its students, the reality is that linguistic racism continues to mark the everyday experiences of potentially bilingual students in their schooling.[2]

Major contradictions in attitudes about English and Spanish surfaced at the site schools. The fact that a principal ordered the tutors in the Youth Helping Youth program to speak only English in the school suggests an overt monolingual policy to which Latino students react adversely. Simultaneously, as some tutors perceived,

> *The school seems to want to keep their bilingual students separated from the mainstream classes. It seemed to me that the staff did not even encourage the students to practice their English.*

> *At the school, the Latino kids were not respected, their bilingualism was used against them, and the teachers did not help them.*

> *Her native language and culture are used against her as the teachers and administrators of her school propagate negative stereotypes.*

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Thus, Spanish is not recognized as an important language in the school culture, but rather devalued as an obstacle to communication. Middle school Latino students recognize these negative attitudes, and many react against them in ways that are misinterpreted by teachers and administrators. Astudent expressed in the focus groups that his bilingualism was an asset rather than a disadvantage:

> *You just screwing me because you're a racist, I mean you hate it that you're Black and I'm Mexican, and I got two languages and I'm better than you.*

Given the racial tensions between African Americans and Latinos, this young Mexican deployed his bilingual skills as a tool for power in his interaction with a teacher. In addition, potentially bilingual students, such as C., resisted learning English as an expression of cultural and political resistance. Many Mexican students, in contrast to recent arrivals from Puerto Rico, feel that if they speak English, they *"would be betraying [their] native Spanish."* Tutors observed, however, that this passivity with English is precisely that, a refusal and not necessarily a sign of lack of knowledge of English: *"C. knows more than she lets on."* Discussion groups during the spring term reflected divergent attitudes about speaking English among recent Mexican and Puerto Rican students, one of many sources of conflict between the two groups which characterized their discussions. While most Puerto Rican students considered learning English as a functional, practical tool that does not threaten their strong Puerto Rican identity, many Mexicans felt wary about losing their Spanish-speaking identity.[3] Genderwise, Mexican female students were angered at a Puerto Rican male who gave them orders in English, thus showing that they were resisting the use of English as a language of power and authority (and patriarchy, given the gender dynamics of this particular situation).

Most Anglo tutors from the Youth Helping Youth program have studied some Spanish and, in fact, some of them enrolled in the course in order to practice their Spanish skills. As mentioned before, this factor was crucial in equalizing the differentials of linguistic power between tutor and tutee, as both were able to share the frustrations, pain and shyness that come with trying to speak a foreign language. Moreover, tutors were very creative in allowing the Latino students to use their different degrees of bilingualism as an empowering tool in the learning process. One tutor, for instance, would read a book in Spanish with her tutee; they would take turns reading it aloud and the tutee would correct the tutor on her Spanish pronunciation. The student would then translate the story, little by little, into English, thus reviewing her reading comprehension and transferring that knowledge into the second language.

A Latina tutor who was English-dominant but who spoke some Spanish, also experimented with strategies for linguistic empowerment:

> *I found that I can work productively with the two of them if I enlist their help for myself. By acting like I didn't know how to say something in Spanish, I was able to speak in English and they also spoke English. This worked especially well for S. It gave her the power to teach me and it helped her practice English. I know that they both understand a lot more English than they let on.*

Working with two students simultaneously, tutors developed ways of allowing students to be useful with their linguistic knowledge:

> *S. helps me communicate with M, who does not speak much English. I asked S. several times how to say certain words or phrases in Spanish, and those that were too difficult he would translate directly into Spanish for M. and into English for me.*

> *Working with (...) girls turned out to be a good idea. The two girls could not speak English so E. served as a translator. This was a great self-esteem and confidence booster for him. He found himself capable of doing something nobody else in the group could do.(...) I would take them both to the board and show them both how to do a problem. E. learned because he also had to become a teacher in order to explain in Spanish what I was trying to say.*

The experiences of these tutors suggest, first of all, that Latino students should be deployed as important linguistic resources for learning rather than as "alingual" beings. Those students more proficient in English can become allies in the teaching of English to those who are beginning. Academic content can be taught in creative ways in both English and Spanish, allowing bilingual students to learn the material by explaining it to others. Most importantly, cooperative forms of learning are definitely

more akin to the Latino culture than individual-oriented competition. As one of the tutors observed, Latino students turn values of competition into collaborative ones:

> *I had candy bars for them and told them that whoever won could pick their candy bar first. They had a lot of fun and M. won so they both got their candy bars. And I thought it was so cute because they went around the room sharing their candy bars with everyone. I don't think either ate half of their candy bars, they gave so much away.*

In this instance, the tutor had created a competitive situation by bringing candy bars as the reward, although at the end both students were winners. However, the fact that the students shared their rewards with the rest of the group speaks clearly to the importance of community among them. In her short observation, the tutor herself expressed some dissonance with these values, as she concludes that "they gave so much away." The short testimonies above speak to the positive effects of collaboration on the students' degree of motivation to learn and work. Assignments which isolate students, as well as tasks requiring rote memorization, are not appealing to any student, regardless of race and culture. Unfortunately, these types of tasks are still commonly assigned throughout our public schools.

There needs to be more strategies for collaborative learning, and integration of Spanish and English into academic content and school culture. Thus it is important to provide Spanish-speaking teachers and administrators where there is a significant Latino student population, and education about the nonremedial nature of bilingual programs, and their principles and results.

Thus, the blaming of the parents, of Latino culture, or of the youths themselves for the high dropout rates in Latino communities, ignores the exclusion that Latino youth experience in their relationship to educational institutions, and the bad experiences that they have in school that literally "push" them out (Finn 1992). Part of the reason that Latino students feel as if they are being pushed out of school is that they perceive that they need to choose between their communities and their education. Education is offered as a way to escape not just the economic hardships of the barrio, but Latino culture in general. If these are the choices that educators are offering our youth, how can we expect any of them to succeed? The fact that many children do, in fact, make it through an educational system which considers them detrimental to its very agenda is an astounding accomplishment and must involve a difficult and painful negotiation on the part of these children.

In other words, today's educational system does not merely disregard the ethnicity of Latino students, but actively rejects this ethnicity and the accompanying cultural experiences as not merely irrelevant to their education, but as actually detrimental to their development as "Americans." Ethnicity cannot be understood as something which stands in the way of education.

In light of these unabated practices, university scholars have a responsibility to address issues of cultural competence in the preparation of future teachers.

Cursos/Cursos

While the University of Michigan has implemented diverse outreach and community service learning projects that benefit Detroit's African American youth, programs of this kind for the Latino sector are few, if they exist at all. We applaud the efforts to develop more African American centered curricula that addresses issues ignored by traditional curricula, and we believe that these efforts will have direct and positive effects upon the academic achievement of these children. Equal sensitivity and respect for Latino contributions to knowledge are also in order. The Black and White dichotomy which informs the discussion of minority issues denies the greater cultural diversity existing in our communities.

Latino/a Literature: The Politics of Language and Cultural Identity

This upper-level course for undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Michigan is designed to introduce students to issues of linguistic colonialism in the United States, specifically the conditions by which the Spanish language is subordinated to the dictates of a homogeneous national identity deemed "American." The ultimate objective of the course is to develop students' awareness of how language is not a neutral cultural zone, but rather how it is intimately intertwined with constructs of national identity, race, ethnicity, and class conflict. One of the main tenets of the course is that linguistic racism and colonial alienation have been and continue to be part and parcel of Latino/a students' negative experiences in their schooling, and that these structural factors

impede their academic progress and success abinitio. Moreover, students learn about the various dialects, forms of bilingualism, and speech acts of the three principal Latino groups in the United States in order to recognize the legitimacy of these linguistic practices, thus minimizing the social stigma attached to them by educators in particular.

Because of the interdisciplinary approach to social, cultural, class and race dimensions of languages, students from various disciplines enroll in the course. During the winter semester of 1995, a total of 41 students took the class. Of those, 30 students were Spanish majors and enrolled through the Spanish program, while 11 enrolled through the American Culture Program. The class also included five graduate students, all of whom were U.S. Latinos from various disciplines, History of Art, American Culture, English, Creative Writing, and Sociology. In terms of ethnicity, 20 students were U.S. Latino/as, four African Americans, one Asian American and 16 were Anglo American students. This diverse composition is critical for creating a site for intercultural dialogue and conflict. Given the small but increasing number of U.S. Latino/as who are majoring in Spanish, cross-listing the course with the Program in American Culture (within which the Latino Studies Program is located) allows for that cultural and ethnic diversity among the students. In the last two years, a number of students majoring in Education or working towards their teaching certificate in Spanish enrolled in this course. This year, two students in the class also enrolled in the Youth Helping Youth Project. It is also important to point out that Anglo Americans were outnumbered by U.S. Latinos in this course, a factor that may have influenced the reactions of the former to the course.

During the first half of the semester, students are exposed to testimonies, narratives, poetry, and scholarly essays written by U.S. Latinos, which document instances of linguistic racism against Spanish-speakers in the United States. This first part of the course, entitled "Colonizing through Words," engages students in understanding how historical processes of linguistic standardization and homogenization go hand in hand with nation building, as E.D. Hirsh illustrates in his *Cultural Literacy*. In dialectical tension with these processes of nation-building, students are then introduced to Ngugi wa Thiongo's analysis of colonial alienation as he narrates his own experiences about learning English in Africa and analyzes the effects of cultural colonialism on children's development. As he defines it, colonial alienation occurs as a result of cultural control. Children in colonized countries experience a gap between their real life, the world of the community, their natural and social environment, and the images, written, and spoken language through which this reality is articulated and organized. Thus, cultural control occurs through the "deliberate undervaluing of the subordinated culture" and the "conscious elevation of the language and culture of the colonizer."

Thus, linguistic homogeneity within the United States needs to be understood as a branch of political imperialism, particularly as it affects linguistic minorities in the United States and in Latin American countries such as Puerto Rico, the latter is an ideal case study for tracing the effects of U.S. colonialism. Students also read about and discuss the English Only Movement, national controversies and debates on bilingual education, and ethnic labeling, as three additional sites of linguistic colonialism in the national sphere. Readings by Rosaura Sánchez on Chicano Spanish, Richard Rodríguez's *Hunger of Memory*, Joshua Fishman, Ana Celia Zentella, and the U.S. English Resolutions are but a few examples of the diverse ideological positions represented by the readings.

To enhance and complement the students' cognitive understanding of these issues, subsequent readings testify to the ways in which these larger, dialectic forces — homogenization and resistance — affect the personal lives and educational experiences of individual U.S. Latino/as. Autobiographical narratives, memoirs, and personal essays by Latino/a writers who represent diverse socioeconomic and racial identities, such as Jesús Colón, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Rosario Ferré, Tato Laviera, Richard Rodríguez, Gloria Anzaldúa, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Rubén Medina, José Antonio Burciaga, and Lorna Dee Cervantes, among others, allow students to see how differences of class and race within and among U.S. Latinos affect the experiences and social values ascribed to being bilingual. While for authors such as Rosario Ferré and Rubén Medina, possessing English and Spanish was a result of their own class privilege as upper-class "latinoamericanos," for those Chicano/as and U.S. Puerto Ricans who grew up in the United States as linguistic minorities their experiences as bilinguals were fraught with feelings of conflict, pain, loss, shame and anger. Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of "linguistic terrorism" is introduced in order to document the ways in which the suppression of Spanish, particularly in the schools, has had repercussions of physical violence, humiliation, and intimidation for Spanish-speakers across the country. Students read diverse essays and recollections by U.S. Latino and Latina writers who recall the negative schooling experiences still experienced by middle-school Latinos in Detroit. In other words, these college students

begin to distinguish, through a certain empathy evoked by testimonial narratives, personal essays, and even poetry, the differences between what Kenji Hakuta has termed "additive bilingualism" among individuals of dominant sectors, or the knowledge of a second language in addition to the first, and "subtractive bilingualism," embodied by Latino and Latina children labeled as linguistic minorities and by most of the Latino students in our class; in the latter group the second, dominant language is learned at the expense of losing one's mother tongue or linguistic heritage.[4]

This structural difference was clearly reaffirmed in a writing project entitled "Linguistic Autobiographies." Students were asked to write a personal essay, of about five pages in length, in which they reflected on their own personal experiences on becoming bilingual. Questions that serve as general guidelines help students begin to reflect on these experiences:

> *Discuss your own relationship — affective social and intellectual — to your mother tongue and to your second language. Do you see yourself as a bilingual/bicultural individual or not? Trace your entrance into the linguistic world of the Other. Did you first learn a second language at home, at school, during travel abroad? How would you characterize those first experiences with another language? What meanings and values — professional/functional, symbolic, ontological, political — have languages had for you throughout your life? Contextualize your discussion by including references to geographical, social, and historical and generational factors.*

Linguistic autobiographies were discussed by students in small groups in the classroom. After sharing their experiences with three or four other classmates in racially diverse small groups, the entire class discussed the different experiences that they identified among each other. The social differentiation between the positive, instrumental, and socially prestigious values ascribed to Anglo Americans learning Spanish, on the one hand, and the negative social stigma attached to bicultural, bilingual children from Mexican American, U.S. Puerto Rican, and even Cuban American families, was clearly articulated in these discussions.

For many Anglo American students, this realization is very painful, as they have to confront and question their own social privilege as learners of Spanish. Many of these students resisted acknowledging this privilege, while others recognized being oblivious to these differences in the past.

This semester's discussion about what it meant to be bilingual was extremely probing and challenging. When a Mexican American young woman voiced her personal "anger" at Anglo Americans for appropriating Spanish and being able to travel to Spain, while Chicanas like her struggled to be able to speak Spanish without shame, the class erupted in a very explosive way. Anglo American students were very offended at her comment and interpreted it as reverse racism. Other Latino students separated themselves from this opinion and observed that they were happy to see Anglos learning their language and culture. Yet without this apparently explosive comment, the discussion would not have been as productive as it turned out to be. As facilitator, I asked all students not to personalize this Chicana's anger, but to analyze it as a result of structural inequities. Why was she angry? What did this anger reflect about the differentials of power among diverse social and ethnic groups? What is the social and racial history of colonialism behind this young woman's anger? What did her anger reveal about the additive and subtractive bilingualism that characterizes different social groups? How did this anger, in turn, prevent her from acknowledging Anglo Americans' interest for other cultures? These were important questions that actually led to moments of intercultural understanding. However, the anger and pain left a mark on the classroom dynamics during the rest of the semester. A student thus commented in the evaluations:

> *The only real concern is that I, as an "Anglo" student felt somewhat separated from the Latino students, sort of as a result of the discussions. As if there was hostility between the two groups, which there is, I know. I just wonder if somehow part of the discussions could work to promote understanding and the desire for harmony between groups. But I do understand that this is a class about Latino culture in the United States and there are a lot of unresolved and upsetting issues to be dealt with, and I think this course definitely did a good job of bringing that out.*

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An important site for intercultural understanding, however, emerged during this discussion as Anglo American students shared with the class the feelings of alienation, silencing, and exclusion they had experienced as foreigners in Spanish-speaking countries such as Spain and Mexico. As facilitator of this discussion, which lasted two class periods, I stressed the importance of those experiences as windows to understanding the realities experienced by U.S. Latino/as and other linguistic minorities. Indeed, many of the bilingual Anglo tutors in the Youth Helping Youth Program attested to the ways in which they shared with their Latino students the frustrations of learning a second language. These shared experiences became a common ground for both tutor and tutee and motivated the students to keep on practicing their English:

> *L. and I talked about how it feels to speak a different language. I told her that I sometimes feel like I'm mispronouncing things and that I just feel silly trying. She said she understood how I felt and for the rest of the morning we spoke both.*

By recognizing the analogous feelings of frustration and exclusion that come with learning a second language, students from diverse cultural groups can begin to interact on a more equal basis, thus minimizing the hierarchies of power and status behind their communicative act and social interaction. For the Anglo tutors who spoke some Spanish, the Spanish-dominant Latino students became a resource for their learning. Simultaneously, the Latino students benefited from having tutors who could personally identify with the difficulties and obstacles inherent in second-language acquisition. In the university course, the discussion about these experiences of learning Spanish allowed the Anglo-speaking students to empathize with the affective repercussions of linguistic minorities. However, it was clearly understood that Anglo-speaking students experience linguistic inferiority or exclusion largely in temporary ways, without losing their status as dominant bilinguals in the United States.

After the section on "Colonizing through Words," which was addressed mostly through dialogue and discussion, the second part of the course consisted of introducing students to scholarship and literature which analyzed and documented the use of English and Spanish among U.S. Latino/as. The materials studied in this section, "Beyond Linguistic Fronteras: Speaking Resistance and Transcreation," attempted to bring together sociolinguistic articles about similarities and differences in the bilingualism of Chicanos, U.S. Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans; technical analysis of code-switching in which students identified both linguistic and contextual reasons for the switch; readings about Pachuco Spanish and its influence on Chicano speech, along with transcriptions from pachuquismos to standard Spanish; and analysis of interlingual poetry by writers such as Alurista, José Montoya, Tato Laviera, Sandra María Esteves, Miguel Algarín, and others; other themes, such as alternatives to monocultural literacy and the "tropicalizing" influence of Spanish in Latino/a literature's written in English, were included in order to assess the impact of Latino cultures in "American" life.

The major objective of this second section is to familiarize students with the diverse forms of speech acts, interlingualism, and dialectical differences that characterize the three principal Latino groups in the United States. By recognizing these interlingual forms of communication as systematic structures which do not constitute grammatical nor syntactical deviations, but rather enhance the expressive repertoire of this speech community, students who will be teaching Spanish in the future or who will work with Latino children will be less prone to potential negative attitudes towards bilingualism. In this sense, the reading materials developed cultural competence among future Spanish teachers or bilingual professionals. As a Spanish major candidly commented last year, his parents had been investing thousands of dollars in his university education, yet he was still unable to communicate with Chicanos in his native Los Angeles. Their hybrid forms of language had always been unintelligible to him, a Spanish major whose courses had only focused on Peninsular and Latin American literary classics. In this regard, some students this year recognized the value of this knowledge for future educators as well as for any citizen of a multiethnic society such as ours:

> *"...[the class] encouraged thinking about the subject in terms of being an educator."*

> *"I really feel that the discussions were good about the issues related to a multilingual society — I think they made me more aware of issues, that as a citizen of a multilingual and ethnic society, it is essential to know."*

> *"...it offers a rare opportunity to discuss issues of language and identity from a bi/multicultural standpoint."*

When asked if the student would recommend this course to his/her friends and why, a Latino student responded that:

> *"Yes, because it is the experience that people will be faced with. The number of Latinos is growing and people need to know how Latinos feel as well as we need to know how they feel."*

This student articulates the need for more university courses such as this one in which Latinos and non-Latinos can come together to discuss cultural differences and, ideally, to achieve a better understanding among cultures.

However, "border pedagogy," as employed in this particular class, had some potential risks that need to be recognized and addressed. Student evaluations clearly reflected divergent responses from Spanish majors and American Culture students. Responses from those enrolled in Spanish were mixed. While overall they all appreciated and rated highly the discussions and issues presented, many Anglo American students expressed anger at having felt "excluded" and "alienated" from class discussions. They described the class as too political —*"this was a PC class to the core"*— and felt that their ideas and opinions had been "silenced" throughout the semester: *I usually speak a lot in class, but I hardly did in this class because I felt my opinions were not valued because of my race*." Some perceived the professor as having given preferential treatment to the Latino students during discussion, ignoring altogether the opinions of non-Latinos. One African American student also shared this opinion.

In sharp contrast, almost all (except one) student evaluations from the Program in American Culture, who were all Latinos and Latinas (except one), rated the course in very positive ways. They found this class unique within the university curriculum:

> *I've never before been able to take such a course, it hasn't been offered.*
>
> *Every student should take this course, or one like it (of which there are none).*
>
> *The only course of its kind taught at the university.*

American Culture students perceived the degrees of inclusion and exclusion within classroom dynamics very differently from the Anglo American students majoring in Spanish. Regarding the question on whether there is "adequate time for discussion of different points of view," seven students out of nine replied yes and even commented:

> *Professor Aparicio often asks for student participation in large class discussions as well as designing small group discussions on certain topics.*
>
> *Student concerns and interests were always accommodated and related to the larger lecture. All points of view were allowed to be expressed.*
>
> *Person says something at beginning — by end of class there is a reevaluation. Not necessarily the non-politically correct statement being enlightened, but could be the other way around.*

The contrast between these two sets of evaluations would misleadingly suggest that this had been two different courses altogether. These divergent reactions suggest that Latinos and non-Latinos are approaching "border pedagogy" in very different ways. The general perception of exclusion and alienation among Anglo Americans and some African Americans can be a result of two important factors: first, the new types of pedagogical approaches they encountered in this class, in which a non-traditional and dialogic approach to the material was employed, probably led to different expectations on the part of the teacher from those of the students. In the Spanish program traditional methods of pedagogy continue to be the norm, rather than the exception. Students, indeed, commented that they wanted more "factual information" regarding issues of language among U.S. Latinos, a need that reveals their unease with pedagogical materials that exhort them into critical thinking rather than accumulating facts, what the "banking system" of education under capitalism represents. The desire for more "facts" also suggests that students did not probe the readings for factual information, of which there was plenty, but instead may have interpreted these materials as ideological writings.

The second factor in question is the diverse class composition, which, in combination with the Latino-centered knowledge, led to a feeling of marginalization on the part of Anglo American students. This phenomenon is not exclusive to this class, and as multiculturalists well

know, the experience of displacement for individuals in the dominant sector who take a multicultural class is a difficult experience to negotiate. Meaning, when one's cultural values, norms, and social institutions are displaced from the ideological center of the production of knowledge to symbol and source of social and cultural conflict, then perceptions about the value of the learning process will be informed by a certain resentment toward that shift of power. Anglo American students in this class indeed located the source of their alienation in the figure of the teacher as well as in the reading materials. While many of them found the discussions about linguistic racism productive, they did not seem to take seriously the specific, factual information about Latino interlingualism. Grades for the final exam, which tested their knowledge about this area, were substantially lower than for the linguistic autobiography, a difference which attests to the resistance to learn about code-switching, Pachuco Spanish, and interlingual poetry as seriously as they would review for a final exam on Don Quijote or on historical linguistics. A Spanish major, for example, commented that it was *"unnecessary to do exercises about code-switching,"* although she enjoyed learning about it.

While there is a growing number of Latino and Latina students majoring in Spanish, most Spanish courses for the major are constituted by Anglo American students and taught by Anglo professors. Indeed, a course such as "The Politics of Language" represents an exceptional course in the curriculum, since having Latino students constitute almost half of the class is only made possible by the infusion of American Culture enrollees. Thus, the classroom immediately constituted a new cultural space in which Anglo students face and confront their cultural other on a more equal footing; even more, they find themselves at a political disadvantage since the professor is a Latina and the materials are overwhelmingly produced by U.S. Latinos. In this light, this political space differs from the Youth Helping Youth Program, in which the Anglo American tutors maintain a sense of superiority over the Latino middle-school students in their roles as teachers. In regards to university courses, the risk in these newly-constituted intercultural spaces is, then, what bell hooks has called the "competition for voice," a classroom dynamics by which Anglo American students perceive themselves at a disadvantage given the lack of familiarity or knowledge about the cultural group in question.[5]

As hooks also discusses in *Teaching to Transgress*, the complex issue of the "authority of experience" invested on students of color misleads Anglo American students to feel that their opinions are not valuable or to self-silence; they also feel excluded and personally guilty as the object of attacks when racism and other oppressive practices surface and are acknowledged. The fact that this class was perceived by an Anglo American student as "politically correct to the core" reaffirms these perceptions and reactions. While the professor clarified at the beginning of the semester that the materials, discussions, and issues are "political" in very obvious ways, unlike other courses which veil the politics of any knowledge as "objective," the students didn't seem to react against that aspect until they participated in discussions about racism and White privilege, that is, when they found themselves having to question and dismantle their own privileged position as bilingual Anglos considered by society as the ideal bridges for cross-cultural communication.

The limitations, then, of this course, have to do with the risks taken in courses that try to transform not only the traditional sets of knowledge presented, but the ways of learning that students are socialized into. The objective of developing cultural competence among future teachers is addressed in two ways: by familiarizing students with the linguistic practices of various Latino groups in the United States, and by allowing students to reflect on linguistic colonialism and the suppression of Spanish as it affects educational processes and schooling in particular. By reading personal narratives, this course attempts to create a sense of empathy in students who have not had contact with U.S. Latinos. The classroom itself served as a space for this intercultural knowledge to emerge, be it through discussions, readings, or conflict. However, as a student commented in her evaluation, the component for social action would be a natural follow-up to this course:

> *At this point I feel very motivated to do something about some of the discrimination and other problems... but I wouldn't know what to do. Maybe a part of the course could be a small research-type project into social action activities.*

Ideally, students trained to be teachers should be exposed to cross-cultural encounters through both cognitive activities as well as experiential. While in the university setting a diverse student body will allow for this intercultural dialogue, the engagement of university students with Latino populations definitely enhances and deepens their understanding of cultural difference. We suggest that students participate in a community-service learning course prior to taking more specialized courses such as "The Politics of Language and Cultural Identity." This way, students begin to theorize and discuss Latino

cultures already equipped with an experiential degree that facilitates a more equal discussion among various racial and ethnic groups. Many Latino and Latina students at the university also benefit from working with the community. Thus, a holistic approach to higher education calls for both the cognitive and the experiential approaches in an attempt to develop a more profound understanding of the multicultural society in which we live.

Youth Helping Youth

First, this course proposes to expose college students to Latino youth and their Southwest Detroit community; second, to educate them about cultural aspects of human development, mental health and social change; and, finally, to help the students analyze their practical experience using this framework. The overall goals of the course are to educate students to be able to envision themselves working in an urban community setting and to become motivated to work for social change in their academic and professional careers. As one student stated in his final essay,

> *Overall, this course has done one thing for me that I will never forget. It has instilled in me the desire to change life for these children. I now have a face to place with the horror and therefore my outrage is greater.*

Students constantly repeated this theme of never forgetting, of not being able to get the issues discussed in class and the scenes witnessed in Detroit out of their minds. Putting a face on the issues leads students to constantly think about and reevaluate their former beliefs and attitudes creating a mix of theory and practice which fruitfully integrates cognitive and affective domains in the learning process.

This course is a field course involving two visits per week to Southwest Detroit. A neighborhood school is the site for tutoring and working with the children. The instructor actively participates and supervises the field experiences. Neighborhood walks, planned and led by the instructor, increase awareness of the cultural diversity of the neighborhood, its economic base and its history.

The students learned about Latino culture through the tutoring program as well as through walks in the barrio. Cultural familiarity is learned through all five senses, and these college students experienced a partial submersion that educated them in ways unavailable on a university campus. Therefore, instead of interacting only with their professors and peers, students extend the parameter of their educational experience.

> *An important part of this class was the discussions that took place after the tutoring session. The students talked about their concerns, difficulties, successes and innovative approaches that have worked for them. The discussion helped me to reflect upon my own experience.*

Even the van ride to and from the school site served as a discussion period, *"The different pointers I learned from the class and just discussions I had during the van ride helped me teach with the little success I had."* These ongoing discussions were important for the students as a means to reflect upon the meaning of their difficulties as well as to receive support from other members of the team. *"It was great to do the debriefing groups. Sharing ideas with other people and to learn from our colleagues. There was a lot of great ideas going around."* This exchange of ideas included sharing successful teaching methods which led to a more cooperative learning environment than the traditional classroom offers.

Two days a week, 15 students from the university go to the Detroit middle school for three hour tutoring sessions. The first hour and a half, the college students have a one-on-one academic tutoring session with the intent of improving academic performance in order to increase self esteem, which would then serve as a tool of empowerment. In the second part of the session, the college students attend an informal support group designed to address the common emotional needs of the children. Some of the topics discussed include issues of domestic violence, gang violence, cultural identity, immigration experiences, and the Latino experience in the United States. This tutoring program brings together teaching and learning experiences for college and middle school students since it offers a unique pedagogical environment to bring together the academic and emotional needs of children, thus addressing the ensemble of a child's needs.

Parental involvement is another vital component of this course. The instructor, along with the class participants, holds meetings with the parents in order to provide a safe space where parents have an opportunity to become a proactive and active part of their children's education. These meetings are held at different times to accommodate the parents' schedules.

College students were surprised by the good attendance at the parent meetings.

> *The attitude of the parents of the kids that we tutor really impressed me. Many times, parents of students in inner city*

schools are erroneously blamed for not motivating their children and being involved in their children's education. This semester I saw that this is not true. The parents meetings I attended saw that every parent there was enthusiastic about participating in their children's education.

For many students, this is their first opportunity to interact with urban communities of color. During the semester they realized and could acknowledge in very personal ways the socioeconomic disparities and privileges they have enjoyed as middle-class students. As one student commented:

I was naive to assume that all kids are as lucky as I was. The kids in Detroit were disciplined in a different manner than I was. The child I tutor told me that his teacher yelled all the time and called them tontos."

Another wrote:

My own story is very different from these kids. My parents pay for my school and will for four years. I think I am like the students in Savage Inequalities[6] that went to rich suburban schools, even though my school wasn't rich or suburban. I have the middle class background. I can get anything I want, and I know it. I take it for granted, because my house isn't in one of the barrios on Mango Street[7] or near a migrant farm in Texas.

Another student wrote in his final essay:

In this class, I have learned a lot about myself, the current system of public education, and different experiences of what it means to have different education.

Another stated:

This was a great experience. I feel like I have learned so much about, not just Latino culture, but about social class and economics. These are things that most middle class people are trained not to think about. This class was useful in bringing certain realities to my attention.

And yet another said that:

these readings have provided me with more background to contextualize this experience. The readings in Barrios and Borderlands[8] were especially helpful. All the personal narratives or interviews reveal the struggles of Latino life in the U.S.

In short, the course shed light on their subject as well as on their own lives.

The hands-on pedagogical experience occurs both at the individual and group level. The course includes an intensive seminar that discusses the field experience and integrates the students'experience with selected readings on education, psychology, organizational theory and social change. These selected readings include discussions on inequities in education, socioeconomic status as related to education, PTSD, domestic violence, effects of violence on learning, narratives on growing up Latino/a, and the history of U.S. Latino/as.

For some students, this was the first time they ever read or thought about the Latino community in the United States:

I did not know that Latinos were so invisible in this country until I realized I had never learned about them in my multicultural courses.

This theme was repeated by many:

The readings in this course opened my eyes to a world I did not know existed." and *"I never knew that Latinos experience so much racism in America until reading the books for this class."*

They felt that other courses, even when they do deal with other ethnic groups, fail to convey an understanding of culture,

The most important thing it taught me was about Latino culture. I have taken many Spanish, Russian and Hebrew classes over the years and none has done an adequate job in teaching about culture; the books we read were particularly helpful in creating a real picture of what life is like in America for people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Yet, although the readings did have great impact upon the students, the tutoring program which brought them into direct contact with the people and issues in their readings was what truly drove home the themes discussed in class. This experiential component was fundamental to the success of the course goals.

> *Although the books have been helpful, the actual tutoring has made a world of difference for my education. To sit and talk to somebody who is experiencing things that I only read about is amazing. Tutoring Lupe has taught me that life in America is not as fair as it claims to be.*

And, finally, another student's testimony:

> *I see racism and segregation that I never even thought was occurring in America and it helped for me to meet a person that this was actually happening to.*

The middle class Latino students who never had to deal with the meaning of poverty were especially touched by what they learned. By working with children they saw as their brothers and sisters, they realized that

> *this class doesn't only teach us about theory but about our identity as Latinos.*

And:

> *This course has been painful. I had not understood what being Latino means.*

After each session, the tutors discuss their experiences. They express their estrangement from the world of these children but ultimately understand the closer they feel to the children, the better they are able to relate and communicate with them, i.e. the tighter the bond, the more helpful the encounter.

In addition to the aforementioned, the class participants and tutees interact with one another outside the confines of academics. Each semester there are two field trips designed to promote and foster camaraderie and shared experiences. The first field trip takes place within the context of the barrio, thus creating a strange situation for the university students, but a familiar environment for the tutees. For instance, this semester, the university students and the middle-school children went skating and for pizza in the barrio. The second field trip was a trip to the University of Michigan where the tutees were taken on a campus tour, to museums, and for pizza.

> *The field trips were some of the most valuable things we did this semester. It really gave all of us a chance to bond and to meet the kids other people were tutoring. The trip to campus was especially inspiring to them.*

The impact of the field trips on the children helped the college students broach subjects being discussed in class with the tutees,

> *when Daniel came to Ann Arbor and noticed how few houses were burnt down compared to his neighborhood; this gave us an opportunity to discuss this issue.*

The intent of the course is to create culturally competent professionals sensitive to the needs and differences of Latino communities. We feel this understanding of the children they work with will allow them to identify and eventually remedy the institutional violence the children are victims of.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The most common reasons cited in the literature for Latino youths dropping out of school are boredom, disinterest in activities considered a waste of time, failing to accumulate necessary school credits, poor grades, and numerous home and family responsibilities. Most educators have identified "family factors" as "the usual explanation for student failure." Moreover, bilingualism, and Spanish in particular, historically have been targeted as "the primary cause of failure" (Moore and Pachon 1985), illustrating a pattern of blaming the culture itself that still emerges in relatively recent literature on dropouts (see Davis, Haub, and Willette 1988). This attitude reinforces the "deviancy" of Latino cultural values, displacing the responsibility for education away from the school system. Our research contests these views by integrating the extraneous factors that may affect school completion with a culturally-centered academic and affective intervention through Youth Helping Youth. By exposing Latino/a middle school students to texts authored by Latinos and Latinas and to their literary and artistic expression, we bridged their own personal experience with their academic development.

As to policy, the results of this study should influence teacher training programs, the Detroit school district and the Michigan State Department of Education. In addition, it should influence university policy regarding the need for community service learning programs for Latinos in Southwestern Michigan, particularly in light of President Clinton's newly instituted National Service Program.

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Although this program is not comprehensive in its scope, and does not presume to solve all of the many problems that children face in our urban schools, it does suggest new possibilities for educational intervention, especially at the level of teacher preparation. An expansion of the definition of traditional education to include emotional support has proven enormously beneficial to the students with whom we have worked. Teachers must be prepared as part of their college curriculum to serve children of dif ferent ethnic backgrounds. School children do not live in isolation from their communities, their neighborhoods and their families, and violence in urban communities has a profound impact on the lives of young people. Because of this complexity a thorough understanding of the issues in order to offer emotional support is essential to engaging young minds and keeping young bodies in school.

Educators are not seriously considering how institutional violence affects the lives of their students. Instead, they are attempting to create safe fortresses by controlling the children. Educators need to understand that violence is not something that can be locked out of school because it cannot be locked out of the consciousness of the student who attend these schools. Violence is a phenomenon which is created by factors both outside and the inside the individual. Violence is experienced inside homes and on the streets, and the relationship between the two locations cannot be ignored. One of the important implications for education that this study suggests is that instead of contributing to the hysteria surrounding urban violence, educators and administrators must take the consequences of violence seriously and attempt to counter the popular equation of urban experiences and violence. Instead of consistently suspending children in their efforts to keep the "bad elements" outside of the sanctuary of the school, administrators and teachers should be better trained to address students' needs and to offer them a more nurturing space. Suspension perpetuates the frustrations of students who are being pushed out of public education.

We found that teachers are not adequately educated to address violence in relevant ways. Often teachers are afraid of their students, and in response attempt to impose strict controls in the classroom. Their fear cultivates inflexibility and rejection of any experiences of the children that they teach. We found that these teachers were largely isolated from the Latino community whose children they were attempting to teach. We believe that teachers need to be educated in culturally competent ways and to learn about the entire community which they serve, instead of only focusing on the children in the school environment. Children who are already traumatized are even further traumatized by teaching methods which ignore their experiences. A class which brings together the psychological and educational experiences of children, like the Youth Helping Youth program, benefits Latino youth because it specifically addresses their needs and offers them a forum through which they can express their anxieties.

Ultimately, the most important outcome of this project is that it can provide an educational alternative for Latino children in poor urban settings where violence is endemic. Latino students have become disenfranchised from the educational system in the United States. A successful intervention is urgently needed. Clearly, traditional methods have addressed the needs of Latino youth; an alternative is imperative to the future life of the community. Although school interventions are aimed at different minority groups, the specific needs of Latinos are often underrepresented, if represented at all. This project begins to define, research and evaluate an alternative to traditional modes of education for Latinos, and -- by extension -- for other disenfranchised groups whose neighborhoods are plagued with violence.

Traditional educational initiatives have clearly failed Latino students who live in situations of violence, thereby contributing to the continuation of poverty among this ethnic group. New programs such as youth helping youth integrate emotional support and individualized attention for students, and respect for the multi-faceted needs of the students that they serve. Children's needs cannot be met in a school environment which caters only to their intellect. Other resources need to be made available to students that recognize them as participants in their communities. As extra-curricular programs are cut away from tightening school budgets, young people become more and more alienated from an institution which attempts only to teach them reading, writing and arithmetic in isolation from their other needs.

Endnotes

1 emphasis ours

2 We employ the term "potentially bilingual students" as an alternative to the problematic concept of "limited-English proficiency" students. While the latter suggests that recent Latino immigrants are deficient, the former focuses on their productive potential as future bilingual individuals in a country that prides itself on its own linguistic deficiency, monolingualism.

3 These differences articulate the diverse linguistic attitudes already documented among Puerto Ricans in New York by Juan Flores, Pedraza, et al, La Carreta Made a U-Turn: Language and Culture... Daedalus, which, given the history of linguistic colonialism on the island, have already negotiated the imposition of English in their everyday lives before migration.

4 Kenji Hakuta, *Mirror of Language: The Debate on Bilingualism*, New York, Basic Books, 1986, pp. 8-9 and 40-42 for a discussion of these concepts.

5 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, New York and London, Routledge, 1994, p. 84-85. Here hooks suggests that a classroom where "experience is valued, not negated or deemed meaningless, students seem less inclined to make the telling of experience that site where they compete for voice, if indeed such a competition is taking place. In our classroom, students do not usually feel the need to compete because the concept of a privileged voice of authority is deconstructed by our collective critical practice." However, students still compete, despite our best efforts at creating community, because the reward system, grading, and the economic benefits derived from it, continue to function as motivators in our educational system. In "The Politics of Language," Spanish majors were very conscious about their grades, and they constantly thought that the Latino students were doing better because they were already familiar with the material. Ironically, this was not the case at all.

6 Kozol...

7 Cisneros, Sandra, *The House on Mango Street*,

8 full citation needed

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